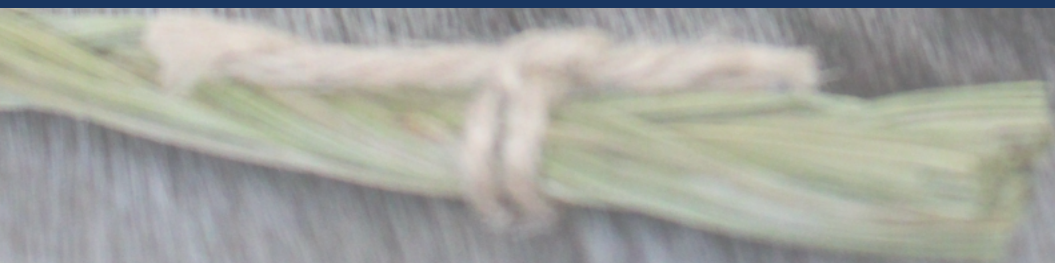




# Strategic Plan 2023-2026



## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Story</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Meet the Consulting Team</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Core Values</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>8</b>
Theory of Change	8
Anishnawbe-Influenced Planning Exercises	9
Taakoopsigaan Exercise	9
Storytelling the Vision	9
Bundling our Strategy Together	10
<b>Strategic Plan: Bundles</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Community Feedback</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>14</b>





## Introduction

The growing urban Indigenous population faces unique challenges to those in their home communities, as they navigate living in the city while trying to maintain connection to their culture and their Indigenous identity.

Since 1983, First Light Friendship Centre has grown into one of the busiest friendship centres in Canada; with over 80 staff, 5 locations, 6 social enterprises and a variety of support services and programming to assist the urban Indigenous population with these challenges. As the world changes, First Light revises its organizational goals and adapts its approaches, to continue meeting our community's needs.

*"You can  
feel the  
weight  
of it."*

*"I do this work  
for my  
ancestors who  
couldn't"*

*"The strength  
of each other  
is what I can  
feel right now"*

*"A mother  
taught me  
patience, to be  
present and to  
have joy."*

## Executive Summary

First Light St. John's Friendship Centre is in a moment of tremendous growth. We attribute this success to the vision and hard work of those who came before us, as well as the commitment and professionalism of our board members and team of excellent staff. However, with exponential growth comes new challenges and opportunities; when big dreams manifest, new trails need to be cleared without losing oneself in the process.

The plan outlined in the following pages represent a careful step forward into First Light's new reality. Covering the period 2023 to 2026, this strategic plan is meant to be a set of guidelines that can help us move forward in service of our community of Indigenous kin. As a guide, Strategic Plan 2026 is only as useful as it is engaged; it is not meant to be a strict set of steps to take, but an informed vision for how to move forward together. When changes need to be made, they will be implemented through close engagement and reflection of the vision outlined within this document.

Strategic Plan '26 was developed by a team of consultants who gathered input from First Light employees and the broader community. Staff members met with Kingfisher Consulting for two days in June 2022 and shared openly about how we can best move

forward. The team of consultants also included an Indigenous statistician who surveyed more than 400 of our community members in the fall of 2022. The results of the survey demonstrated that First Light is well liked, and well followed on social media. In sum, the information gathered gave shape to what we believe is an exciting next phase of First Light's life.

Finally, we see Strategic Plan '26 acting as a guiding force in what is really a transitional period for us. Strategic plans often chart pathways forward on five-year scales. But we wanted to focus our attention on the next three years only, as we believe this to be a critical pivot point in First Light's trajectory.





Our hope is that First Light's broader future will become clear in the next three years, and that we thus use Strategic Plan '26 as a platform to prepare for 2027 and beyond.

In Friendship,

Stacey Howse  
Executive Director



## Our Story

It is no secret that First Light St. John's Friendship Centre has experienced exponential growth in the past decade. Our membership has grown, our staff and workplace has expanded and leaders – new and old – have taken their rightful place at the helm of our Friendship Centre. We have witnessed the influx of substantial dollars and worked hard for new and renewed partnerships at all levels of government. For the past few years, advocacy and diplomatic relations have been established with Indigenous governments in the province and we have been a model for urban Indigenous governance and sovereignty. We have been working diligently to meet and surpass the overall goals and objectives reflected in our previous strategic plan 2018-21. This current plan promises to continue on this trajectory of growth and development and reflect the transformation of the Friendship Centre Movement regionally and nationally.

## **Strategic Plan 2023-2026**

First Light is governed by our membership, Board of Directors, Executive and managers. We serve the urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous community alike by providing programs and services rooted in the revitalization, strengthening and celebration of Indigenous cultures and languages in the spirit of trust, respect and friendship. We are located in St. John's, Newfoundland and are proud to have five (5) locations within the greater St. John's area.

It is important to us that the development of our strategic plan is embodied by Indigenous ways of coming to know. Early in 2022, our Board of Directors invited proposals from Indigenous consulting firms to undertake our strategic planning process with us. Ultimately, we selected Kingfisher Consulting in partnership with

Gimiwan Research and Consulting Inc.; both of which are firms based out of Ontario and come highly recommended because of their Indigenous-centered ways of co-building strategic plans for organizations such as First Light. In June 2022, members of First Light's Board of Directors, as well as the executive team, staff and Elders at First Light's Bannerman Street location participated in a facilitated strategic planning session which occurred over the duration of two and a half days.

This plan centers the knowledge and direction gathered throughout the strategic planning session. This document is a fulsome reflection of the current state of First Light, its ambitions, as well as the landscape in which it operates.



## Meet the Consulting Team



**Kingfisher Consulting** offers a variety of services to primarily Indigenous communities or Indigenous-led organizations. Their services include strategic planning, facilitation, community-based research, transformative education policy development, and information technology services. It is run by Geraldine King, an Anishinaabe PhD candidate who specializes in Anishinaabe research ethics and community-based research and facilitation. Recognizing a lack of Indigenous-specific facilitation practices, Geraldine has developed a suite of tools and exercises that are reflective of Anishinaabe language, worldviews and methods of knowing. Ms. King is a member of and Band Councillor for Gull Bay First Nation (Northwestern Ontario), and she is frequently called upon to as a keynote speaker, national news interviewee, researcher and performer.

**Gimiwan Research and Consulting** serves First Nations and Indigenous-led organizations by providing expert qualitative and quantitative research services, project management, and facilitation. We pride ourselves in using Anishinaabe-based research methodologies in all of our projects, and as such we recognize the importance of kinship and maintaining good relations with our clients. Our president, Dr. Damien Lee holds a PhD in Native Studies and is a

band member at Fort William First Nation (Northwestern Ontario). He is recognized as an expert in re-strengthening Indigenous governance systems through community-driven research. Gimiwan is co-led by Sarah Werner (Vice President and Chief Operating Officer), who is completing a master's degree in Indigenous Studies. Gimiwan's quantitative research and media/marketing services are handled by sub-contractors such as Dr. Veldon Coburn (Algonquin) and Ms. Jolene Banning (Anishinaabe).

## Our Core Values

The organization's embraces seven (7) core values that serve as guiding principles for fostering positive change within our community:

### Respect

Considering community collectivity, and collaboration to be fundamental ways of life; this extends to our vision of land stewardship, our relationship with all forms of life and our interdependence. We value and respect collective and individual human rights.

### Self-Determination

#### **Article 3, UNDRIP**

Recognizing the right to autonomy in matters that affect our lives and communities; the fundamental right to shape our success and determine how success is defined.

### Intergenerational Responsibility

Taking a long-term view and consider the impact of our actions on the environment, the community, and future generations to come.

### Inclusiveness

Prioritize creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all members of the community, regardless of their background, identity, or beliefs.

### Well Being

Viewing health and wellness in a holistic way, considering the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a person's well-being.

### Equity

Recognizing and addressing systemic inequalities, and ensuring that all members of the community have an equal chance to thrive.

### Innovation

Recognize the importance of adapting to a changing world and finding new ways to meet the needs of the community, while being responsible stewards of resources.



## Methodology

The strategic plan has been developed based on data and stories arising from the following:

- 1 2.5 days of facilitated session
- 2 A survey distributed to members

In a participatory framework, often the long-term outcomes of the strategic plan come to life in the bundle exercise process. Under the banner of Theory of Change, emphasis is placed on what conditions must be in place in order for transformation to occur (as opposed to mainstream strategic plans, which often focus on simply meeting deliverables as the indicator of success). During the facilitated sessions, participants identified both the long-term outcomes, as named in the bundles, as well as the pre-conditions necessary to fulfill the overarching strategic planning vision for First Light. It should be noted that pre-conditions are states of being, behaviours, organizational culture, and attitudes



## Theory of Change

Theory of Change is a methodology that is commonly used in social justice movements as it allows for increased flexibility and maximum collaboration. The model underscores the importance of revisiting strategic plans as more evidence and knowledge becomes available, which results in more dynamic and responsive strategic plans. Theory of Change considers strategic plans as living documents, which allows for a spirit to be infused into organizations who seek to better the lived outcomes of specific populations.

## **Anishnaabe-Influenced Planning Exercises**

Throughout the planning sessions, there was an emphasis on Anishnawbe worldviews. Guided by Elders, the following exercises were utilized to foster culturally accurate input into the strategic planning process. Note: because the consultants are Anishinawbe or Anishinawbe-affiliated, the process is influenced largely by Anishinawbe traditions. However, activities and exercises were adapted to be general in nature to assure inclusivity of the diversity of Indigenous cultures in St. John's.

### **Taakoopsigaan Exercise**

At the outset of the sessions, this exercise sought to establish the overarching goals for the next five years. The exercise asked participants to visit with Grandfathers (stones) and assign descriptors to them based on the prompt: Where do you see First Light in five years? Participants then came together to gather and sort the stones into tea towels, which represented Grandmothers. The bundles of tea towels were then named by the group and became the overarching long-term outcomes of the strategic plan. Participants were asked to reflect on their impressions of the bundles as they were passed around the room.



### **Storytelling the Vision**

Throughout the June 2022 session, participants were asked to engage in a Storytelling the Vision exercise. The purpose of this exercise was to draw out pride in the gifts that First Light brings to its work in protecting children, and also to offer the opportunity for every participant to bring their story to the work ahead. Everyone had the opportunity to respond to the prompt: when did you know you were doing your best work? From the stories that were told, the following causes, impacts and outcomes emerged, which help strategic plans to identify areas of work and people that may have gone unnoticed in previous plans.

Another aspect of the storytelling exercise is that strategic plans are invigorated with pride, therein supporting ongoing organizational transformation.



In essence, by bringing the spirit of employees and clients into the milieu of strategic planning, through narrating instances of pride and accomplishment, strategic plans become living documents. In particular, the outcomes portions of the exercise help centre discussions regarding implementation and evaluation, which will largely take place in the action-planning session to come.



### Bundling our Strategy Together

Throughout the 2.5 days, the Grandmothers and Grandfathers stayed in the room and were visited on a consistent basis. On the final day of the strategic planning sessions, participants came together to develop a “voice” for the 7 bundles (vision statements), which form the basis of the long-term objectives of the strategic plan.

The purpose of developing vision statements for each bundle is so that the plan can be re-visited on an ongoing basis and to animate the plan with the understanding that it is spirited and a living document. The bundle name – represented by a vision statement – are reflected on the next pa.



## Strategic Plan: Bundles

Weaving a  
stronger  
braid for  
7 generations



**SUSTAINABILITY**

Shining the light  
that reflects our  
communities



**REFLECTING  
COMMUNITY**

Mobilizing urban  
Indigenous  
sovereignty



**URBAN  
INDIGENOUS  
RECOGNITION**

Ignite  
Culture  
First



**CULTURAL  
ACCESS**

Elevating &  
inspiring through  
culturally &  
spiritually inclusive  
education



**LEARNING**

Activating &  
restoring  
Indigenous  
diplomacies



**SYSTEMIC  
CHANGE**

Reclaiming  
Indigenous  
perspectives  
of our homes



**SAFE SPACES**



## Community Feedback

A survey developed by an Indigenous statistician was distributed to over 400 community members in the fall of 2022. A formal analysis was conducted, and the results informed First Light's Strategic Plan. First Light's programs and services received very favorable ratings. Each program and service was rated on a satisfaction spectrum with positive scores, from over 80% of respondents. The pattern of social media usage is reflected in how respondents engage with First Light's social media presence, with 89% indicating that they use Facebook to interact with the organization. First Light's website was highly rated amongst respondents. When asked to rate the website on a scale of 1-5, 80% of respondents gave ratings of 4 or 5. When asked about interacting with First Light, in person was the top choice, with 78%.



## Implementation

This Strategic Plan charts a course along sacred trails, guiding the organization over the next few years with a commitment to walk in the footsteps of our ancestors and uphold the legacy pathways that ground us in our Indigenous wisdom and values

To effectively implement this plan, the departments at First Light Friendship Centre will designate specific objectives which have relevance to their work. To ensure accountability, each department will set up measurable goals and report regularly on their progress to the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. The Executive Director and the Board of Directors will assess progression of their objectives, and make necessary adjustments to ensure success. The Board of Directors will present the progress report at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for transparency and community involvement.

## Conclusion

We would like to give sincere thanks to Kingfisher Consulting, Giniwan Research & Consulting Inc., our Elders, Knowledge-Keepers, Board of Directors, First Light employees and of course our community, for sharing their knowledge and wisdom, which will help shape the future of First Light in the next three years and beyond. This plan serves as a living document; which can be adapted to accommodate the changing needs of the community.




**Strategic Plan 2023-2026**

## NOTES

[illegible]



shine bright



FIRST LIGHT

St. John's Friendship Centre